

SPEECH

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OF

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HON. REUBEN DAVIS, OF MISSISSIPPI,

ON THE

BILL MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE ARMY.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 17, 1859.

WASHINGTON:
1859.

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SPEECH.

The rules were suspended, and the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, (Mr. JOHN COCHRANE in the chair,) and resumed the consideration of the bill (H. R. No. 667) making appropriation for the support of the army for the year ending June 30, 1860.

The CHAIRMAN. If there be no objection, the first reading of the bill will be dispensed with.

Mr. SEWARD I object.

The bill was read a first time.

The Clerk then proceeded to read the bill by paragraphs for amendment.

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi, said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. GARNETT] made an address to the House a few days ago which I propose to-day to examine and review. He set out with the declaration that Mr. Calhoun had said that all countries were divided into two classes—the tax-payers and the tax-consumers, and he announced that he arrayed himself on the side of the tax-payers; very natural, because I believe that is the strong side of the question. But I am not certain that Mr. Calhoun or the gentleman is right, especially in regard to its application to this Government. Who are the tax-payers of this country? The people. Who consume the taxes? The people, through their agents, of whom the gentleman from Virginia is one. The taxes are paid by the people for their own benefit; for the purpose of sustaining this Government; for the purpose of defraying the expenses incident to the machinery of Government. Taxes are not paid here as they are paid in monarchies, and in countries where the Government is not republican; consequently the distinction drawn by the gentleman is incorrect, so far as our people and Government are concerned. The gentleman himself is a tax-payer, and is also a tax-consumer; and I regard as improper the effort made by him on this floor to array one portion of the people against another. That gentleman pays his share of taxes for the support of the Government, and he consumes his proper portion of the taxes also.

However, that is not the subject to which I desire to direct the attention of the committee to-day. It is to the charge of extrava-

gance preferred by the gentleman from Virginia against the Democratic party. It is true, it is not made direct, but by insinuation, et no less objectionable. He undertakes to sustain it by contrasting the last year of Mr. Fillmore's Administration, 1852--'53, which he put down at \$42,544,262, with the present fiscal year of Mr. Buchanan's Administration, the expenditures of which is \$71,492,398. The motives of the gentleman in making this contrast may be satisfactory to himself; to me they are shrouded in mystery which only the revelations of the future can dispel. By us it is felt the more pungently, as the dagger with which the wound is inflicted is found in the hand of a friend. It does the Democratic party great injustice, as I will presently show, whilst it bestows a eulogy upon our enemies to which they are not entitled.

This contrast is sustained by an argument well calculated to mislead the popular mind. It is this: The gentleman says the territory of the United States was the same in 1852 that it now is, with the addition of the Gadsden Purchase, and therefore infers there is no reason why the expenditures should have increased. Do you not see, Mr. Chairman, how deceptive this argument is? The gentleman has suppressed the important fact, that although the territory is the same, the machinery of Government has increased beyond all comparison with any previous decade in the history of this or any other country. About eight additional States and Territories were admitted into the Union about that time and since, all which have been sources of great additional expense to the Government. California was not, until about that time, any expense to us; now it requires about \$3,000,000 annually to supply her with mail facilities, besides the costs of her Indian wars. Then there is Oregon, Utah, New Mexico, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, &c. Then look at the enormous cost of marching and counter-marching our armies over this vast region of country in suppression of Indian hostilities and defending our frontiers against their aggressions. The admission of these States and the organization of these Territories is not chargeable to the Democratic party more than to the Opposition. The President and his Cabinet could not have done it, and did not. It was the act of Congress. The gentleman should have taken these important facts into consideration, and should not have withheld them, especially as he, a Democrat, was making these important charges against his own party. What motive has actuated him I cannot determine. Does the gentleman desire to destroy the party in order to save himself at home? Loyalty required that he

should have stood by those whose battles he was commissioned to fight, and shared their fate in victory and defeat. I shall not be guilty of the uncharitableness to suspect him for this motive. It is to be found, I apprehend, in a real desire to promote reform and encourage retrenchment; but he should have had a due regard to furnishing the popular mind with all the facts.

The gentleman says that while the expenses of the Government were only \$43,000,000 in 1852-'53, they reach in 1857-'58 \$71,000,000, and that the estimates for the next fiscal year are about the same; and then he asks, "can any gentleman pretend that it is fair, that it is just, that it is legitimate, that the expenses of this Government, in time of profound peace, should have doubled in six years?" Now, let us examine the reliability of this comparison of remote years, and see if it affords a just foundation for the charge of extravagance. In 1852-'53 the expenses of the Government were \$43,000,000; in 1853-'54, \$51,000,000; in 1854-'55 they were \$56,000,000; in 1855-'56 they were \$60,000,000; and in 1856-'57 they were \$64,000,000; and this is the year when the Opposition had a majority upon this floor; had the control of the legislation of the country; detested the Democratic party with fiendish malignity, and would, if it had been possible, exposed extravagance, and reduced the expenses of the Government; but instead of reducing, they increased it \$4,000,000; and even recklessly adjourned Congress without making provisions for the support of the army.

Mr. GROW. I would like to ask how the army bill passed at last?

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi. Well, perhaps some of your votes did help to pass it finally, but it was after a called session.

Mr. MORGAN. I would say to the gentleman that the largest vote that the Opposition had in that Congress was one hundred and three out of two hundred and thirty-three members. How does that make a majority?

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi. You had the organization of this House. You elected the Speaker.

Mr. MORGAN. By a plurality only. We never had a majority.

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi. I should like to know how you succeeded in electing your Speaker by a plurality?

Mr. MORGAN. By the votes of Democrats, who gave us the plurality rule.

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi. It has always been understood, and the record shows the fact, that there was a majority upon this

floor opposed to the Democratic party. I do not know whether that majority was composed entirely of Black Republicans or of their aiders and abettors, but there was a majority opposed to the Democratic Administration and to the democratic party.

Now, then, sir, during that memorable year the sum of \$64,000,000 was expended for the support of the Government. And why it is my friend from Virginia did not discover the important fact that this increase in the expenses of the Government is not chargeable alone to the Democratic party I am unable to tell.

Still, sir, I am not arraigning the Opposition for these expenditures. I am only showing the insufficiency of his proof to sustain his charge, and also to show that the economy of the Democratic party contrasts most favorable with that of the Opposition. In 1857-'58, the expenses of the Government were \$72,000,000; and it will be remembered that the Utah war prevailed during that year, and cost the government some five millions.

But for that cause, the expenditures of the Government during the last year would have exceeded but very little, indeed, the expenses of the Government during the year when the Opposition had a majority on this floor. Now, how is that to be accounted for? I shall not charge, because I have not the facts before me on which to base the charge, any unnecessary extravagance by either party.

I account for it upon the general hypothesis which is applicable to all other things in nature. I might say of the gentleman from Virginia that he is a boy. He would tell me that he is a man, possessing all the elements and attributes of a man. I might respond that he was a boy five years ago, and ask how he became a man; he would tell me by progress. The Government, during the period referred to by the gentleman, was far inferior, in point of size and wealth and population, to what it is to-day. Its progress in wealth, in population and in the machinery of Government, has been most wonderful, yet constant and gradual; and this very progress affords a solution for the like constant and regular progress in expenditures, and is a complete answer to the charge of extravagance in the absence of any specifications.

Mr. STEWART, of Pennsylvania. I want to ask the gentleman whether, in 1856, the appropriations exceeded the estimates furnished from the Democratic departments?

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi. I do not know that they did. But if the gentleman insinuates that those appropriations were wrong, why

did not his party, which had the power here, make an investigation into them? Why did it not correct them?

Mr. CURTIS. Were not those departments under the control of a Democratic Administration?

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi. The Opposition party are constantly making charges of dishonesty against the Democratic party. Why did they not look into those estimates and publish to the country wherein they were wrong? If they could have shown they were wrong, were dishonest, then they could have had some predicate for their charges. But they have not done so. Either they did not make that investigation, or if they did, they found nothing to sustain their false aspersions.

Mr. CURTIS. Was not the Senate also Democratic at that period?

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi. I take it for granted, then, if there was a majority of one party here and of another in the other branch, and a Democratic President, and a Democratic Cabinet, that they did what was right. The presumption of law is, that men are honest until the contrary is shown. Since you have charged dishonesty upon us, when you had the power in your hands to show that dishonesty, why did you not do it? Why did you not give the facts and figures? You knew that it could not be shown, and therefore you did not publish the results of your investigation to the world, if you made any investigation.

Mr. Chairman, the estimate for the present year is \$52,441,315; a sum less by \$11,000,000 than was expended by the Opposition party when it was in power in 1855-'56. It is true there are estimates of \$8,000,000 and \$12,000,000 for another purpose. These estimates are not only to supply deficiencies, but actually to meet requirements of laws passed at a former session. Then, sir, I may safely say, that the amount estimated for the support of the General Government for the present fiscal year, by the Secretary of the Treasury, is \$20,000,000 less than that of last year, and nearly \$10,000,000 less than the amount expended by the Opposition when it had control of this House. I make this contrast, not for the purpose of charging dishonesty against the Opposition; not for the purpose of reflecting upon them; but to do justice to the party to which I belong. I want to show that the Opposition, when it had control of the affairs of the Government, increased the expenses gradually, as we have done when under our control; and that, therefore, the presumption is, there are natural causes for this increased expenditure, and that the sums now expended do not afford just cause for the charge constantly made of extravagance.

Now, the gentleman insinuates there is extravagance and impropriety in the War and Quartermaster's Department. I ask whether in that he makes a charge of dishonesty against the present Secretary of War?

Mr. GARNETT. I presume that the gentleman from Mississippi cannot mean to seriously put that question to me.

Mr. DAVIS, of Mississippi. While I put the question, I at the same time made answer to it. I presume that he does not mean to make a charge of dishonesty against the Secretary of War. As he does not make that charge, I suppose he does not mean to charge incompetency upon the Secretary of War. If he charges neither, then I would like to know how he infers that the estimates from the War Department are wrong or improper? If there is anything wrong in the estimates from that Department, that could be easily ascertained by investigation; and if the gentleman had desired a committee to investigate these estimates, this House would have created it. That committee could have examined into every item of expenditure on the part of that Department. It could have been ascertained for what purpose every dollar expended since the present Secretary came into power has been paid out. When the report had come to the House, if there was anything wrong we could have instituted reform. There, then, would have been a predicate, some basis, for the charge of mismanage in this important branch of Government. But there is nothing of the sort done. There is no showing of improper conduct on the part of the Secretary of War. The truth is, sir, that Department has never been managed with more ability. The entire reason for the enlarged wants of that Department was the Utah war of last year, and the necessity of suppressing Indian hostilities.

Take next the Navy Department. I suppose no man on this floor will insinuate that the Secretary of the Navy is dishonest or incompetent. I have not heard such an insinuation from his bitterest or most vindictive enemy. Then, we are to presume, if he is competent and honest, his estimates are correctly made, and predicated on proper data, and that these data are the experience and observation of the operations of the Department during the previous year. If that is not to be regarded as the true rule by which we are to be governed, there is but one other left, and that the gentleman from Virginia has not seen proper to avail himself of. He might have moved for the appointment of a committee to investigate the expenditures of that Department; and if improper expenditures had been discovered, then

the means of retrenchment would have been found out; and if the Secretary of the Navy had given cause for his removal, his place would have been filled by a better officer. That has not been done. Then I say that the Department ought not to be condemned, in the absence of proof, by innuendo, or insinuation, or implication. Such a thing is not allowable on principles of justice, of law, or of right. Your navy has been greatly enlarged. Ships which had been rotting in your docks have been put afloat. We have all felt the war-throbbings of the nations of Europe, and for several years could not mistake the premonitions of its rapid approach; and this required that your vessels-of-war should go forth to protect your commerce which spread itself over every sea.

I come now to the Post Office Department. How does that stand? Complaint is made because \$6,000,000 is asked to supply deficiencies in the Post Office Department. How has that been brought about, and who is responsible for it? Certainly the Postmaster General is not; certainly the President is not; certainly the members of the Cabinet, who consult with him in regard to the best mode of conducting that Department, are not. The Postmaster General, I apprehend, has not paid out a dollar except in obedience to law. If he has, the fact can be ascertained, and the means of retrenchment could in that way be discovered. But no investigation has been asked for; no effort has been made to show that there has been an improper or unnecessary use of money in that Department. What is the cause of the greater expenditure of money in that Department, and in all the other Departments of the Government? It is known that in almost all the older States of the Union the receipts of the Post Office Department cover, or nearly cover, the expenses, while in the newer States and Territories the receipts are small and the expenses large. For instance: the ocean mail service to California, which came into the Union in 1851, now costs \$3,000,000 a year. That is not the fault of the Postmaster General, nor is it the fault of California. California was admitted into the Union by the act of the Government, and we are bound to give it the same facilities and advantages that are enjoyed by other States of the Union. I admit that in all this there might have been retrenchment; and I endeavored last winter, most arduously, to defeat the ocean mail system, of which the mail service to California is the most expensive part.

I ask any man on this floor, I ask the gentleman from Virginia, if he is willing to surrender a single mail facility in his district. I take it he is not. I am certain I would not surrender any of the mail facilities of my district. If there are too many mail facilities extended to the country it is not the fault of the Postmaster General. They are established by Congress, and members are induced to ask for them at the earnest and pressing solicitations of their constituents. If the people demand these facilities, of course they must foot the bill.

Now, I endorse all that part of the gentleman's speech in favor of retrenchment. I am as much in favor of retrenchment as any gentleman on this floor. But I do think that if the gentleman had gone directly to work and introduced a bill with the object of effecting retrenchment, it might have been done in less time than has been consumed in discussing the subject. If, then, the expenses of the Government can be reduced, let us proceed to do so. Let a bill be introduced into the House either by special committees or general committees who have charge of such departments of the Government. Let retrenchment come in that form; tangible, comprehensible, easily to be understood by the House and by the country.

I do not pretend to say that there is not more money expended than is necessary. I think there has been. But this money has been expended under the authority of acts of Congress, passed by our predecessors and by ourselves. It is not the President that is to be held responsible, nor are any of the Departments. The responsibility rests on Congress. And yet Congress has done what it thought was for the interests of the country, and on the best information within their reach.

But, Mr. Chairman, I deny that the saving for the next fiscal year proposed by the gentleman is reform. It is refusal to appropriate money at this time to complete important national works now in progress, and which the gentleman admits must be finished as soon as the treasury is replenished. All he has said, then, about reform is deceptive—delusive; and he knows it. Sir, half the time of this session, important as it is to the business interest of the country, has been consumed in idle clamor for reform. Yet no champion of that cause has been able to suggest a beginning point or to discover where the extravagance really is. It is quite easy to complain and carp, but it is more difficult to discover the existence of error and suggest a plan of reformation. The one requires words only, which all men possess; the other, high order of statesmanship, which few men possess in these days of ambition.

Having said so much on that subject, I desire to examine, for a very short time, the remarks of the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. PHILLIPS] on the subject of the tariff. He sets out with the declaration that American labor must be protected. I desire especially that my portion of the Union shall understand what is meant by American labor.

Now, what is American labor? I know that, in the southern States, we are told by gentlemen opposed to the Democratic party that American labor embraces every species of labor upon this continent. It is not so understood at the North, and is not so defined. I take it that Mr. Webster will be regarded as reliable authority on the subject; and what does he define American labor to be? He said:

"I have spoken of labor as one of the great elements of our society, the great substantial interest on which we all stand; not feudal service, not predial toil, not the irksome drudgery by one race of mankind, subjected on account of color, to the control of another race of mankind; but labor, intelligent, manly, independent, thinking and acting for itself, earning its own wages, accumulating those wages into capital, becoming a part of society and of our social system, educating childhood, maintaining worship, claiming the right of the elective franchise, and helping to uphold the great fabric of the State. That is American labor, and I confess that all my sympathies are with it, and my voice, until I am dumb, will be for it."

Now, you perceive from that, that the system of protection advocated by the gentleman from Pennsylvania does not include the species of labor denominated "slave labor" in this country. Mr. Webster put what he called the pauper labor of Europe and the slave labor of this country on precisely the same footing; and the only labor for which he asked protection was the white labor of the North. Are we, then, of the South to be induced to support a measure which is intended to discriminate against our system of labor, and in favor of a different system of labor? I, for one, shall never be found voting for any measure that is to have the effect of discriminating against the portion of the Union in which I reside, and in favor of a different portion of the Union.

Now, sir, we are constantly being told by gentlemen from Pennsylvania that they have granted favors to the slave interests of the South; and they think it extremely ungrateful in us now not to stand by them in support of a measure which is necessary to their prosperity and welfare. Now, I had not understood that that was the reason of the political action of the gentleman from Pennsylvania. I had supposed they

were governed by what they conceived to be their constitutional obligations—not only to themselves, but to every portion of this Union alike. And if, sir, their motives in such support as we have received from them heretofore have been predicated upon the idea that we were afterwards to become slaves to them and to their interests and their views of policy, then I must confess I feel no obligation to them for their votes.

Sir, the southern States, in seeking an expansion of the institution of slavery, have not been incited by a dread of the emancipation of their slaves. I, myself, have never had any, and I have none now; because I have always believed, and I believe now more strongly than ever, that the people of the North know their interests as well as any people on the face of the globe, and they know well that a more fatal blow could not be struck at their interests than the overthrow of the institution of slavery at the present time. They feel and know that it would involve every interest of the free States in ruin and destruction.

I say, then, that we apprehend no danger from that source. Our object has been to preserve an equality of power upon this floor, in order that the North might not force upon us measures of class legislation which would take from us the proceeds of the labor of our slaves, in the shape of taxes for the benefit of the people of the North. I would much prefer that our slaves should be emancipated at once, than that, by an unjust, unequal, and unfair system of legislation, you should take from us the proceeds of the labor of our slaves. Our object has been to preserve ourselves from a system of legislation which I believe, and which those whom I represent believe, would be unjust to us, and too oppressive to be borne.

Now, how does this question of the tariff stand? The gentleman from Pennsylvania told us that he did not desire protection—that he was opposed to protection; that he was in favor of fixing the tariff at a revenue standard, and that the revenue standard should afford incidental protection. We are compelled to collect revenue for the support of the Government by aid of tariffs, and I admit that that system must have the effect of giving incidental protection. But so far as the iron interest is concerned, I ask if Pennsylvania is not already amply and fully protected. What say the gentlemen from Pennsylvania? They tell us that the better kinds of iron, under the act of 1824, cannot be brought into this country for sale, because they can undersell the importer of foreign iron of that quality. So far as that quality of iron is concerned, the act of 1824 amounts to a prohibi-

tion. It is, therefore, not only protection, but absolute prohibition, according to the confession of the gentleman himself. But they want increased duties to enable them to compete with the inferior qualities of iron imported into this country from Europe; they want the duties raised upon the inferior qualities of iron in which they cannot compete with the European manufacturers, so as to amount to a prohibition also.

Now, in order to make this question so intelligent that it cannot be controverted, I desire to call attention to some figures. Iron costs, in Europe, \$46; add \$10 expenses of getting here. This gives, at twenty-four cents, \$13 per ton; and, of course, equalizes iron in this country, and gives \$6 on the ton protection. In reference to this point, I desire to read again from Mr. Webster. He says:

"I will only add, that, if we mean to keep up American labor under these operations, we must hold to protecting our industry from the competition of foreign labor. Labor abroad is cheap, because the people live poor. English iron costs \$8 02 per ton for wages; while American iron, the result of American labor, costs \$15 82, because American labor means to live well, means to earn enough to educate its children, and to perform the duties of a citizen. Therefore I insist that it shall have wages, and high wages. We know that some others of these iron works are about to stop. The evil is not confined to this branch of industry. The wages of handicraft in Philadelphia are also cut down one-third—I mean the hand-loom weavers—and fifteen hundred hands have been thrown out of employment in this branch of industry alone."

The cost of the labor of making a ton of iron in England is \$8 02. In Pennsylvania, the cost of labor of making a ton of iron, as early as 1849—it is cheaper now—was \$15 82. The difference of cost, then, is about \$8 per ton. Now, sir, if you add \$8 by way of duty upon English iron, you make the cost to the English manufacturer of delivering iron here \$15 per ton, the same that it cost the Pennsylvanian. Then the Pennsylvania iron stands upon the same footing with the English iron, and they are on terms of equality in market, neither having advantage over the other in the cost of production.

Now, under this act of 1846, you have at the present time \$13 per ton duty, and that gives you now \$6 per ton protection; and any man who will reflect for a moment will acknowledge that six per cent. protection will soon drive out of the market all competition. Is not that prohibition? If it is not, I do not know what prohibition is. If it will not prevent the importation of iron into this country, I cannot tell what will. The gentleman, then, cannot be right in his figures, or in the position he assumes, that he is not in favor of protection,

but of revenue only. Nine per cent. protection is not a revenue measure, but prohibitory.

Now, I desire to pursue this subject a little further. To make it perfectly plain, suppose five hundred tons of railroad iron were imported into New York. The price in Wales is \$46 a ton; the freight, insurance, and other expenses, amount to \$10 a ton, which makes it cost in New York \$56 a ton; or \$28,000 for the whole. On this sum, the duty, under the present tariff, would be \$6,720. Thus it will be seen that our southern and western States, whose railroads are now in a state of progress, are required to pay \$6,720 to enable the iron manufacturer of Pennsylvania to enter into the market in competition against the British seller. Thus the railroad companies, estimating eighty tons to the mile, are required to pay, in duties, \$1,075 per mile for the benefit of the Pennsylvania iron interest. And that is under the act of 1846.

And yet gentlemen, not satisfied with imposing upon every little railroad in the southern country the sum of \$1,075 per mile, are demanding an increase of six per cent. duty, so as to make them pay about \$1,400 a mile. And this they demand, too, after the northern States have completed most of their great network of railroads. Now, is it right that we of the South and West should be compelled to submit to an increase of duties upon iron at this particular time?

But how stands the question as far as Pennsylvania is concerned? I had a document sent me last night from Pennsylvania by some gentleman engaged in the manufacture of silk. At the present time raw silk belongs to the free list; and, while he insists that iron shall be protected, he as strongly insists that the article which he imports to carry on his business shall not be dutiable, but shall come in free.

Another gentleman from Pennsylvania writes here that he is a large wholesale importer of foreign fruit; and, while at present there is a duty upon it, he insists that, in a general revision of the tariff, his fruit shall be put upon the free list. So it is, every man in Pennsylvania who is engaged in a particular branch of business insists that his pursuit shall be exempt from taxes, but that the entire burden shall be placed upon iron.

The demand is wrong in principle. Of course, I am in favor of a revenue tariff. I say, at the present time, that if we are to raise a revenue by a tariff, we must have a revenue standard. But that standard is not a prohibitory standard.

[Here the hammer fell.]

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